

## Used Tea Bags by MistressYin

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**Summary:**

Steve is faced with a pleasant surprise.

## Used Tea Bags

### Author's Note:

Sup. This probably wont make sense without reading the other stories of this series.

And the phrase of the day is...Used Tea Bags

Steve glared at his friend's trash, scoffing. At least two boxes worth of used tea bags had been carelessly dumped into the trash, leaving him glaring at it menacingly.

What in Hawkins lab had they been doing with tea bags? Tea bags that were all different flavors?

Some of them were even spilt with some mixture still left inside. A bit of leaves had been thrown across the floor, making him glad for his shoes because damn, those would get stuck to your feet.

He looked around the house, seeing no one. Usually in the Wheeler house someone was either watching TV or chatting mindlessly on the phone.

He had just walked in to this mess. His fingers itched to clean it up, but then he reminded himself they might be doing something with them? He didn't know, he was just going with it.

Eventually, his cleaning habits won and all of the dirt had been swept into a dustpan and the trash squished down to average side.

He tapped his foot, wondering if he should just go finish up his school.

But then the door swung open and he jumped up, curiously tilting his head to see Mrs. Wheeler bustling into the room, looking flushed.

"Oh, uh heyyy, Mrs. Wheeler. I was just looking for the kids, they called me over and I'm kind of worried. The door was unlocked, sorry to barge in like this." he sheepishly rubbed his neck, feeling stupid for walking into an empty house unauthorized.

She startled so bad she tripped over her feet, letting out a loud squeal. "Oh hello Stevie. How have those kids been lately, they seem to never be home." she questioned and stated at the same time.

"Just fine Mrs. Wheeler, Mrs. Byers likes having them over anyway."

She beamed at him, her breath coming out in pants. "Are you okay, Mrs. Wheeler? You seem flushed."

Instantly she began waving her hands around. "Oh goodness steve! What an awful thing to say to a lady. I've just been going on a jog, is all?"

That's when Steve noticed the short sleeved basketball jersey she had on pulled over her normal white frilled top. Smoke stunk up the room.

He panicked. "Uh, yea Mrs. Wheeler, I've got to go find the kids, we'er playing hide and seek across Hawkins and their clearly not here so..."

She tilted her head and waved at him, perplexed. "Well, by Stevie?"

The last thing Steve saw before he hustled out of the door was the number on the back of the jersey.

Number 13. The jersey Hargrove never seemed to be wearing.

Fuckity fuck FUCK.

(Used Tea Bags)

Steve sat out with a goal in mind. Ever since the incident with Maxine, Hargrove had kept his space, but with the whole dad thing, Hargrove didn't so much as look at him. He avoided him in class, in games, and if possible, in the locker rooms as well.

It was kind of unnerving because before Hargrove had been completely up in his face.

Now he was just absent.

But Steve was going to find Hargrove, and figure this the fuck out. Because he knew for a fact it was illegal for 17 year olds to date 18 year olds, he knew this. Technically, it was like arbitrary rape or something. But with Hargrove it just felt wrong and slimy, like it was somehow all his fault.

But Mrs. Wheeler! On her husband!

How come it was always him?

Of course this lead back to the fact Jonathon and Nancy were also gone, Hopper was on duty, and Mrs. Byers seemed to be his only option. He decided to start his story off with Tea bags.

“So there was something you wanted to talk about?” Ironically, as she said this, she was making tea, wrapped up in making food that didn’t exactly smell right.

He decided the best course of action would be to help her so explaining this would be less awkward.

“You know, I think someone stole all of my tea. Does Nancy like tea?” Mrs. Wheeler asked conversationally.

“How many do you have left?”

“Odd enough, one of each of the flavors I like to mix up to get it just right. I thought I was lucky or something. Why?”

“I think I know what happened to your tea.” He laughed, wiping off dishes and glasses that had not yet been dried and were merely just sitting abandoned on the table. He screwed his nose up at the disorganization.

“Wait, was it the kids?” she demanded, crossing her arms as hair flew in front of her eyes.

“Oh yea. I think they stole more than just from you. I went over to the Wheelers house because they called me, kind of panicked. I heard some yells of ‘NO’ and ‘We don’t need you!’ but decided to come over

anyway just to be cautious. When I arrived, the only thing left there was a bunch of, well, tea bags all over the floor. Like, seriously, everywhere!" he became more animated as he talked, waving around the bowl he was holding to try to get her to understand how weird it had been.

"Those kids...why couldn't they have stolen someone else's tea?" she mumbled absurdly under her breath. Apparently, disappearing objects must have been a regular occurrence as she continued, "First the syrup, then the muffin mix...what, are they playing tea party?"

Steve laughed, drying off the last cup and turning around, careful not to make contact with the counter because he could still feel his head throb.

"Uh, yea, that kind of leads me to the thing I wanted to talk about earlier. I saw Mrs. Hargrove come in to the house just before I was about to leave. She looked...peculiar."

He had Mrs. Byers's full attention now. "And what might that mean?" she raised an eyebrow and crossed her arms, defensive and much more intimidating. He shifted, feeling uncomfortable, unused to a mother's stern stare.

"Uh, well, she was red in the face, really flushed, yea? And she was wearing a, uh, a basketball jersey...with the number thirteen on it."

Mrs. Byers lost her intimidation stance now that her friend wasn't being criticized and merely analyzed, mouth dropping open in surprise. "You know, I thought after everything that happened with Will, nothing would surprise me anymore. This, this surprises me."

Steve winced. "It gets worse. I, I know who's Jersey it was."

Mrs. Byers froze, looking at him intently. "Who's was it?"

Steve shifted, turning away and crossing his arms as he suddenly felt like cold wind just swept up his spine.

"Billy Hargrove's,"

Mrs. Byers paused, brow furrowing then, "What?!" she shrieked,

hands curling as her eyes blazed indignantly. “Max’s brother?”

Steve nodded and rubbed his head. “What am I supposed to do? ‘Hey kid, not only is your mom cheating on your dad, but your mom’s cheating on your dad with a member of your group’s brother. Cool right?’”

Ms. Byers groaned. “They’re going to find out eventually. Are you sure, anything happened?”

“She had to use the excuse she was on a jog, Mrs. Byers. I’m sure.”

(Used Tea Bags)

Steve sighed and rubbed his eyes, then sighed again and massaged his mouth. Looks like Mrs. Byers had been right.

They were having a tea party. Of sorts.

When he walked into Hoppers (his?) house, he found that all the kids had yelled ‘surprise!’

They had a big soup pot being used as the centerpiece on the table, filled up with tea. Surrounding it was paper plates that had clearly been marked on, words written on each plate it seemed. Muffins were placed on a napkin next to the plate, and a curly straw was in each cup. They had a ladle in the soup which they were undoubtedly going to use to pour the tea as if it were soup.

“Happy birthday, dumbass.” Max grinned.

He had completely forgotten. He had never really had a birthday party before. Just a celebration with his parents co-workers where he was put on display like a shiny toy. He rubbed at his eyes again, scared to speak knowing his voice was going to crack. He took a calming breath.

What he wasn’t expecting however, was the flash of a camera.

“Happy birthday Steve.”

Jonathon smiled at him for what was probably the first time, Nancy on the right of him holding a pan with frosting on it.

Mrs. Byers had known! She had told him to head on home and she'd call after she discussed this with Hopper!

Hopper said he had an extra long day! Had he...

“Hey kiddo!!! Guess what I remembered!! All of your favorite kinds of tea.” Jim walked out, hair mussed and sloppy grin on his face.

His heart swelled. He knew he had the biggest smile he had ever had on his face. He hid his face in his hands.

“Come here, shit heads. I need a distraction hug or else I'm going to start bawling.”

They rushed towards him, clambering and maneuvering at their different heights around his head.

Hopper ruffled his hair and Steve distinctly heard another click of the camera. Stupid Jonathon and his stalking.

“Thank you all so much, oh my god, I...jeez, I totally forgot.” He knew his eyes were puffy but he couldn't care.

“The kids were assigned tea job. Sorry Steve,” Nancy apologized.

He shook his head. “No, fuck, it's perfect. Tea pots are stupid to use anyway, let's soup ladle this shit,”

Lucas laughed. “Dustin panicked when we spilt the first batch of tea, and suggested we call Steve, forgetting you know...the surprise. Will listened and you know the rest.”

Steve laughed hard, smiling brightly. “Oh, well, shit guys, I've been surprised.”

His heart was racing a mile a minute. He could feel the clarity of his mind this very minute. Everything was calm and the wind washed

over him.

“Oh my god, I just can’t...I’m ready to test all of your guys’ shit cooking. And cleaning, I came to the house and tea bags were everywhere!”

Mike laughed awkwardly, signifying he had been the cause of the mess. Jane pursed her lips in her own form of laughing.

He hurried to sit down, and saw that yes, there was words on each plate. Words with each person name on them. Whole long paragraphs on the paper plate and a date to boot.

“What...” he mumbled.

Jonathon quirked his lip at him, having chosen once full smile was quite enough. “I helped them with that. It’s all the things you’ve done for us.”

Steve waved his arms around, collecting the plates, aghast. “We can’t eat on these!”

Laughter followed him.

The rest of the night was spent playing lots of rounds of poker and lots of hugs. Steve definitely did not cry when reading his plate’s thank-you-very-much, but he may or may not have teared up (depending on who you asked, Steve would deny it until his death bed) when reading Jane’s and her boasting about all of the times he saved her from Hoppers cooking.

By the end of the day, Steve was bouncing off the walls and exhausted at the same time. Mrs. Byers had come over and they all ate lots of junk and played lots of games and he was happy.

And while there was no real presents or fancy bikes like all of his previous birthday parties with his parents business partners had had, Steve couldn’t give a rats ass. Who needed bikes when you had wonderful cards written on paper plates anyway?

Steve decided he could share his findings about Hargrove later. Right now, he shoved another muffin in his mouth and smiled.

**Author's Note:**

Thanks again from MistressYIn